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LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
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November 12, 2015

Mr. Carlos Benavides, President
Los Angeles County Commission on Disabilities
Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, B50
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mr. Benavides:

Thank you for inviting the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to make a presentation to the Commission at its August 19, 2015, public meeting. As presented at the meeting, DMH addresses disability issues at multiple levels, from policies and procedures that formally direct staff to ensure access, to actual provision of services including accommodations for people with developmental disabilities, mobility impairments, and other physical disabilities.

The DMH has a formal agreement with local sites of State-operated Regional Centers in the County to ensure that individuals with developmental disabilities and their physicians have access to mental health treatment as well as consultation about treatment and medications as needed. Collaboration occurs at both policy and direct service levels to create more responsive systems for individuals with both developmental disabilities and mental illness.

I hope the attached summary of our presentation meets your needs. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to make a presentation to the Commission on Disabilities. Should you have questions, please feel free to call me at (213) 738-4978.

Sincerely,

Dennis Murata, M.S.W.
Acting Chief Deputy Director

DM:BB:cm

Attachment

c: Irma Castaneda, Ph.D.
      Karen Fullner

At the August 19, 2015, Commission meeting, senior staff Dennis Murata, Deputy Director; Irma Castaneda, Ph.D., Deputy Director; Karen Fullner, Administrative Support Bureau Chief; and Rakdy Khlok, Senior Disaster Services Analyst, from the Department of Mental Health (DMH) addressed the Commission. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, they provided a description of the Department's responsibilities and specific examples of efforts to ensure access to services for individuals with disabilities.

Mr. Murata acquainted Commissioners with DMH services and responsibilities as well as the budget and funding sources. DMH has three primary sources of funding, including Federal funds such as Medi-Cal and Medicaid reimbursements for treatment, funds allocated by the State for realignment, and Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding from State taxes. With approximately $2.2 billion in annual funding, DMH serves over 260,000 individuals each year.

Dr. Castaneda highlighted DMH's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State's seven Regional Centers that are located in the County. The MOU has been in place since 1999. Currently, senior level managers from the Department and the Regional Centers meet quarterly to discuss collaboration and policy issues and to establish direction and priorities for on-going efforts. Local DMH program staff and Regional Center staff in each geographic area meet routinely to discuss access to care, conduct case consultations, and develop cross training on clinical topics relevant to dually diagnosed children and adults. These efforts have created significant improvements in services for individuals with dual diagnoses. The Regional Centers were provided MHSA grants by the State Department of Health Care Services to support and facilitate collaboration between DMH and Regional Centers. Examples of projects include training for psychiatrists on medication management; evidence-based practices for children and families; and recognition, screening, referral, evaluation and treatment tools to effectively access services for transition age youth.

Ms. Fullner noted that DMH conducted an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) audit of its programs in collaboration with the Chief Executive Office, Disability Civil Rights Section to ensure appropriate physical access to facilities. A Transition Plan continues to be used to ensure that deficiencies are corrected and identified barriers removed in all facilities by DMH or, in some cases of leased property, by the landlord. DMH has focused greater attention on ADA issues in leasing processes and space plan design to be more proactive. Additionally, the Department now makes the County Complaint and Grievance Procedure available to the public as a vehicle to gather information and respond to complaints alleging ADA non-compliance.

Ms. Khlok described the Department's emergency/disaster planning efforts. DMH and other County departments provide monthly reports to the County Office of Emergency Management about their disaster planning activities for people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. The County actively participates in the six-year, Court-ordered, multi-agency disaster planning effort led by the City of Los Angeles that addresses the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. The group's goal is to have an inclusive emergency planning report that incorporates the spectrum of different population needs. This collaboration with other organizations has included sharing best practices in disaster planning, and an opportunity to raise awareness about people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. DMH updates its various disaster plans periodically and will continue to incorporate issues related to persons with disabilities and others with access and functional needs.

Mr. Murata described various other initiatives including public information and outreach efforts focusing on anti-stigma messages and cultural competency; new program development for those with hearing and visual impairments; development of health neighborhoods that are broadly inclusive; and the role of peers in recovery.

Mr. Murata, Dr. Castaneda, Ms. Fullner, and Ms. Khlok answered questions posed by the Commissioners and members of the public to close their presentation.